## WAKING AT NIGHT.

When I wake up alone at night
I feel as if I had no eyes;
I stare and stare with all my might,
But only blackness round me lies.

I listen for the faintest sound,
And, though I strain with either ear,
The dark is silent all around;
It's just as if I could not hear.

But if I lie with limbs held fast,
A sort of sound comes like a sigh—
Perhaps the darkness rushing past,
Perhaps the minutes passing by.

Perhaps the thoughts in people's heads,
That keep so quiet all the day,
Wait till they're sleeping in their beds,
Then rustle out and fly away!

Or else this noise like whirring wings,
That dies with the first streak of light,
May be the sound of baby things,
All growing, growing, in the night.

Children and kitty-cats, and pups,
Or even little buds and flowers,
Daisies, perhaps, and buttercups,
All growing in the midnight hours.

And yet it seems to me a part,
And nothing far away or queer—
It's just the beating of my heart,
That sounds so strange as I lie here!

I do not know why this should be;
When darkness hides the world from sight,
I feel that all is gone but me—
A little child and the black night.
—Mabel Dearmer, in London Spectator.

# THE STURGIS WAGER

### A DETECTIVE STORY.

By EDGAR MORETTE.



CHAPTER XXI.—CONTINUED.

Sprague rushed to the speaking-tube and whistled long and loud, after which he placed his ear to the mouthpiece.

"I hear some one walking," he suddenly exclaimed.

The two men listened in breathless silence for an answering call.

"Well, gentlemen, what can I do for you?"

The words came in Murdock's voice.

Sprague's eyes met those of the reporter and saw that the last faint glimmer of hope was gone. In that swift and silent interchange of thought there was resignation to the inevitable doom and the final farewell of two brave hearts.

The spluttering candle gave its last flicker and went out, leaving the prisoners in utter darkness.

The room was rapidly filling with gas and they were beginning to feel its effects.

"We can at least complete our task before we die," said Sturgis, with grim determination.

"Our task!"

"Yes, and insure Murdock's conviction for our murder."

"What chance is there that anyone will ever discover our bodies, since they are destined for Murdock's oblivion tank?"

"Give me your hand," Sturgis replied; "there is a box of matches. I place it here, between us, within easy reach. I want to write a few words to the superintendent of police to explain matters. By that time there will be enough gas in the room to produce a terrific explosion, when we strike a match. We can thus succeed in wrecking this place and calling attention to it. If I should succumb before you do, do not fail to light the match."

While he was speaking the reporter had taken from his pocket a pad and a pencil and had begun to write as rapidly as he could in the darkness.

Sprague's head was beginning to swim and his ears were ringing, but the thought of Agnes Murdock was uppermost in his mind.

"An explosion!" he exclaimed; "no, no; that must not be. What of Agnes? She may be hurt?"

Sturgis continued writing.

"It is the only chance there is of bringing Murdock to justice," he said, firmly.

"But Agnes is innocent of his crimes," urged the artist, in a thick voice. His tongue clove to his palate; he felt his consciousness ebbing. "Why should she suffer? I am going, old man—I cannot hold out any longer—Promise me that you—that you will not—strike—the match—"

He staggered and fell against the reporter, who caught him in his arms. His own senses were reeling.

"Promise—" pleaded the half-unconscious man.

"I promise," answered Sturgis, after an instant's hesitation.

It struck a chill to his heart to see his friend dying in the prime of youth, strength and happiness.

Suddenly a thought flashed upon him.

"Brace up, old fellow. All is not yet over. The speaking-tube leads to fresh air. Here, put your lips to it and breathe through your mouth."

The artist heard the words and made an effort to obey these directions. With Sturgis' assistance he managed to place his lips to the mouth-piece of the speaking-tube. A few whiffs of comparatively fresh air sent the sluggish blood coursing through his veins and gave him a new hold on life. With renewed vigor came the animal instinct to fight to the last for existence.

As the shadows of death which had been closing in upon him receded, he became conscious of Sturgis' voice beating upon his ears in broken and scarcely audible tones.

"It is—the last chance—Stick—to the tube—When he comes—surprise him—your revolver—shoot—before—"

The reporter was clinging unsteadily to his friend's shoulder. Sprague suddenly realized that Sturgis in his turn was succumbing to the effects of the gas. He sprang back in time to catch the staggering man in his arms.

"Selfish brute that I am!" he exclaimed. "Here: it is your turn to breathe!" And he pushed the reporter toward the tube.

"No, no," said Sturgis, struggling faintly; "it cannot be both—and you—have—everything—to live for."

But the artist was now the stronger, and he succeeded in forcing his friend to inhale enough fresh air to restore his departing consciousness.

At length Sturgis, with returning strength, was about to renew the generous struggle with Sprague, when suddenly the place was ablaze with the glow of an electric light.

"He wants to see if his work is done," whispered Sturgis, to his companion.

Then, observing that Sturgis was again on the verge of asphyxiation, he continued hurriedly:

"Fill up your lungs with air, quick!—quick, I tell you. Now drop and feign death. Do as I do."

Suiting the action to the word, Sturgis threw himself upon the stone floor, face downward, and lay motionless, his right hand grasping a revolver concealed beneath his body. Sprague, after a short breathing spell at the tube, followed his companion's example.

After a short interval there came a metallic click, which Sturgis recognized as the sound made by the opening of the slide in the panel of the door at the head of the stairs.

A moment—which seemed an eternity of suspense — followed, during which the prisoners felt, without being able to see, the cold gleam of the steely eyes of Murdock at the grating.

Would he enter? Would he suspect the ruse? Would the two men retain their grasp of consciousness and their strength long enough to make a last fight for life?

These thoughts crowded upon the reporter's brain as he lay simulating death and making a desperate effort to control his reeling senses.

If Murdock were coming he would have to shut off the gas and ventilate the room. What was he waiting for?

"Come in!"

The words were Murdock's as he turned away from the grating and closed the sliding panel.

"An interruption which probably means death to us," whispered Sturgis to his companion; "take another breath of fresh air, old fellow; we must hold out a little longer."

Sprague, however, lay motionless and unresponsive. The reporter shook him violently and turned him over upon his back. The artist's body was limp and inert; his eyes half closed; his face livid.

The reporter himself felt sick and faint. But, with a mighty effort, he succeeded in raising his friend in his arms, and dragging him toward the speaking-tube. There, of a sudden, his strength failed him. His head swam; his muscles relaxed; he felt Sprague's limp form slip from his grasp, tottered, reeled, threw his arms wildly about him for support, and fell, as the last elusive ray of consciousness was slipping away from him.

CHAPTER XXII.

FATHER AND DAUGHTER.

After Sprague had left her, Agnes, shaken by the conflicting emotions of the day, had gone to her room to rest and to prepare for the interview which she meant to have with her father on the subject of her lover and of Chatham.

Having received word that Murdock would remain in his study during the rest of the afternoon, she had taken time to reflect upon what she meant to say, and how she meant to say it. Her visit was not prompted by the desire of a daughter to confide the great happiness of her life to the loving sympathy of an affectionate parent; but Agnes was punctilious in the performance of what she considered to be her duties, great and small, and she counted it among those duties to obtain, or at any rate to seek, the paternal sanction of her choice of a husband.

Her knock at the door of Murdock's study was answered in the chemist's quiet voice:

"Come in."

As she opened the door, Murdock advanced to meet her. He seemed to come from the direction of the extension.

Miss Murdock sniffed the air.

"Isn't there a leak of gas?" she inquired.

"Yes," replied Murdock; "I have just stopped a leak in the laboratory. Won't you take a chair, Agnes?"

She felt his calm, searching glance upon her; and, in spite of her preparation, she grew embarrassed, as was her wont, in her father's presence.

"Did Mr. Chatham wait to see you this afternoon?" she asked, after a momentary silence.

Murdock observed her narrowly.

"Yes; Chatham has been here today. I did not know that you had seen him."

"I could not help seeing him; for he forced his way into the parlor, in spite of all the servants could do to prevent him."

An almost imperceptible furrow appeared between the chemist's eyes.

"Has he been annoying you with his attentions?"

The words were spoken in Murdock's usual tones; but Agnes saw something in her father's eyes and in the firm lines of his mouth which sent a cold shiver down her spine, and caused her pity to go out to the unfortunate young man who had offended her.

"Perhaps he is more to be pitied than blamed," she suggested, gently. "My interview with him was certainly not pleasant; but I bear him no malice."

"Tell me about it," said Murdock, slowly.

Agnes gave her version of the visit, in which, instinctively, she softened, as much as possible, the passion and brutality displayed by the accountant.

Murdock listened in silence until she had quite finished. Then Agnes noticed that his right hand was clenched upon the arm of his chair with a force which caused the muscles to stand out in hard knots. She looked up into his face in sudden surprise.

His features gave no indication of what his feelings might be; and his voice, as usual, was steady and deliberate.

"I am sorry all this should have happened, Agnes. As I told you yesterday, I hoped to save you from this man's importunities. It cannot be helped now. But I think I made it clear to the gentleman that his attentions are as distasteful to me as they are to you. As he seems to have told you, he has been obliged to leave the country—I understand that he has done something or other which makes it safer for him to undertake a long journey. At any rate, we are well rid of him for some time to come, and I think you need have no fear of further molestation."

"What did he mean by saying that he had had encouragement from you?" asked the young girl.

"I am sure I do not know. That was of course a lie out of whole cloth. He came to me with letters of recommendation from good friends of mine, and I therefore occasionally invited him to the house; but that is all the encouragement he ever got from me. We live in the United States and at the close of the nineteenth century. The selection of a husband is no longer performed by a stern parent, but is left entirely to the young girl herself. That is certainly my way of looking at the matter. When you find the man of your choice, my only function will be to give you advice, if you seek it, and my best assistance in any event."

The turn of the conversation thus suddenly brought to the surface the topic which occupied the young girl's mind, to the exclusion of all others; and which, for that very reason, had been kept severely in the background up to that point.

"That reminds me," said Agnes, consciously, as a charming flush suffused her beautiful face, "that I have not yet broached the principal object of this interview—"

Murdock observed her closely and waited for her to proceed. But Agnes

TOTTERED AND REELED.

was once more laboring under a strange embarrassment and could not find words in which to frame the confidence she was so reluctant to offer.

Perhaps the chemist divined something of the nature of what she was struggling to find expression for. At any rate, he noticed her embarrassment and endeavored to come to her assistance with a few encouraging words, spoken with unusual gentleness. Agnes, engrossed with her own thoughts, did not notice it; but there was in his manner as near an approach to tender wistfulness as his nature was capable of.

At last the young girl seemed to gather courage, and she was about to speak, when there was a knock upon the door.

"Plaze, sur; there do be two gintlemin in the hall."

"Who are they, Mary?"

"Shure, thin, sir, I dunno, barrin' wan uv 'em do be a polacemun."

"Did they ask to see me?"

"They did not, sur; shure they asked if Mr. Chapman was in."

"Mr. Chatham?"

"Yis, sur. And I told 'em he wuz here this afthernoon, and I wud see wuz he here now, fur I ain't seen him go yit."

"Well, Mary, you see he has gone, since he is no longer here," said Murdock quietly. "Take the gentlemen into the parlor, and tell them I shall be with them in a minute."

"All right, sur."

After the maid had left the room, the chemist rose from his chair and walked toward the door leading to the library.

"If you will excuse me for a few minutes, Agnes, I shall see what these men want. Wait for me here, if you will. I shall be back directly."

So saying, he noiselessly opened the folding doors and passed into the library, closing the doors carefully behind him.

Freed from the presence of her father, Agnes almost instantly regained her composure. She had not, however, had much time to collect her thoughts, when she was suddenly startled by a loud, shrill whistle, which brought her to her feet in alarm.

"Well?"

She asked the question in anxious tones, as if realizing that life and death were in the balance. Then she placed her ear to the mouthpiece.

At first she could not make out the words spoken by her invisible interlocutor. Then, gradually, they fell upon her ear with terrible distinctness; and she stood spellbound, as in a horrible nightmare, with sudden terror in her staring eyes, and with the fearful sense of impotence in her trembling limbs.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE SPEAKING TUBE.

Nature has implanted in every one of its living creatures, from the top to the bottom of the scale, the strongest of all instincts—that of self-preservation. As Sturgis fell forward and clutched wildly at the air, his hand struck the stone wall of the square chamber. No conscious impression was made upon his brain by the contact; but, automatically, his fingers tightened as they slipped over the smooth surface. His right hand struck an obstacle and closed upon it, in the convulsive grip of a dying man. Then a sudden gleam of consciousness swept across his sluggish brain.

It was the speaking-tube!

He clung to it with the remnant of his strength and eagerly placed his lips to the mouthpiece. For a few minutes he drank in with avidity the revivifying draughts of air which gradually brought him back from the brink of death.

With returning consciousness, the thought of his dying friend recurred to him in all its vividness. He tried to go to his assistance; but he was sick and faint, and his limbs were powerless to respond to his will. Then, at last, he was seized with utter despair and gave up the struggle.

He had sunk dejectedly upon the chair when a faint and indistinct murmur, as of distant voices, beat upon his ears, whose natural acuity seemed extraordinarily increased by the long nervous tension under which he had been. The ruling passion is strong in death; without knowing just why he did so, Sturgis found himself again at the speaking-tube, endeavoring to hear the conversation, the sound of which evidently came from Murdock's office.

He could barely distinguish a word here and there; but he recognized the timber of one of the voices. It was the chemist's, and his interlocutor was a woman—perhaps his daughter. If only he could reach Agnes Murdock with some word or signal.

In suspense, he held his ear to the mouthpiece, occasionally taking a breath of fresh air to renew his strength.

Should he take the chances and shout in the hope of catching the young girl's attention? If he whistled, Murdock would answer himself, and the last chance would be lost. But would she hear a shout? And, if she did, would not her father prevent her from rendering any assistance? Yet what other chance was there? Poor Sprague was dying; perhaps already dead. There was no time to lose.

[To Be Continued.]

## THE TIMELY SERMON.

**One That Was Unpremeditatedly Delivered at Great Expense to the Preacher.**

Thoreau said that once, having occasion to borrow an ax from Emerson, he took it back sharper than he received it. Although he may do so less voluntarily than Thoreau, the borrower habitually pays interest, and often usury, upon the tools or sentiments which he appropriates.

A shy, nervous clergyman, says the late Bishop How, was once asked to fill the pulpit of a sick friend, for which purpose he hastily borrowed a clearly written sermon, headed, "The Value of Time." He got on very well in the pulpit till he came to a sentence saying that as the parish had no town clock, it was his intention to present one. Being too nervous to skip the sentence, he did actually present the promised clock, which cost him over $300.

Under like circumstances, relates Youth's Companion, another vicar first discovered in the pulpit that the manuscript sermon from which he was preaching had been prepared upon the occasion of a farewell. The allusions to the event being too numerous to be omitted, the vicar spoke boldly of the close of his 12 years' ministry, reduced many of his congregation to tears, and put his wholly unpremeditated resignation into effect.

An Ohio minister, on the contrary, some years ago decided to close a long pastorate. The carefully concealed satisfaction of his congregation found expression in a farewell reception, and a silver water-pitcher with laudatory addresses. All this so touched the heart of the recipient that he exclaimed: "My dear people, I will not leave you!" and there he is to this day.

**Early New York Police.**

In 1658 New York had in all ten watchmen. In New England at the same time the constables and watch were all carefully appointed by law, says the Albany Argus. They carried black staves six feet long, tipped with brass, and hence were called "tipstaves," the night watch was called a bell man. He looked out for fire and thieves and other disorders, and called the time of the night and the weather. The pay was small, often but a shilling a night, and occasionally a "coat of kersey." In large towns, as Boston and Salem, 13 "sober, honest men and householders" were the night watch. The highest in the community, even the magistrates, took their turn at the watch, and were ordered to walk two together, a young man with "one of the soberer sort."

**Will Be a Woman.**

"Henpeck's baby is tongue-tied, they say. Is he going to have its tongue cut loose?"

"No; he says he don't think he will. It is a girl."—Philadelphia Bulletin.

**Correcting Him.**

"I will make you walk the chalk!" exclaimed the angry customer, as he led the milkman through the stream of spilled milk.—Baltimore American.